

Contributions

INHERITANCE. (A Sermon)

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"That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."
Titus 3:7.

The question may be asked, how are we justified by his grace? The apostle Paul replies, "by maintaining good works for necessary use; and to deny ourselves of ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Or in other words, by showing ourselves a pattern of good works; in doctrine, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that whoever is of a contrary mind may be ashamed, having no reason to speak evil of us. So then, this inheritance is possessed by those only who are Christians indeed. What a peculiarity distinguishes them from all creatures, and what importance ranks them above all! What a number of qualities, excellencies, and advantages they possess! And we cannot do anything like justice to the various and numberless beautiful representations, by which they are held forth to our view and admiration in the scriptures of divine truth. But we shall contemplate them under the character of heirs, and as such we shall consider them in the grandeur of their estate, the clearness of their title, and the certainty of their possession. A person may be an heir to a grand cottage, or a large domain of land, or even a throne; but what is this to be compared to the inheritance of the Christian? We have a grand and beautiful representation in the Revelation by the Apostle John, of the Golden City. The picture is not overdrawn, for the Spirit of God revealed it to him while upon the Isle of Patmos. Rev. 21:9, etc. Those then, that are written in the Lamb's book of life are called heirs, according to the promise, heirs of the grace of God, heirs of the kingdom, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, heirs of salvation, and heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Paul prays that the Ephesians might know it, and thus be enlightened, and then he speaks of the hope of their calling and the riches of the glory of their inheritance among the saints. We talk of the inheritance upon earth, and we labor and toil and struggle to accumulate in order to possess an inheritance here. This is all right if we employ honest and proper efforts. But what is the comparison to that inheritance over yonder, where the river of life, clear as crystal flows, and where there shall be no more curse. God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, for there shall be no more partings, no more deaths, no more sorrows, no more pains, no more revilings and persecuting, no more slanderings: for all these things are passed away.

Again, we shall consider the clearness of their title. How often do we sing that beau-

tiful hymn composed by Dr. Watts, "When I can read my title clear," etc. I have already wondered if we ever contemplate properly its beautiful sentiment. No person ever had a claim to an estate so clear and so decisive as the Christian has to his inheritance. He may not be so certain of it in his own mind. There is a difference between a right and a perception of that right. An heir, by reason of his tender age, or infirmity, or some trouble over which he has no control, may be unconscious of the inheritance that awaits him. So some Christians may be ignorant and fearful. They may condemn themselves within their own minds as to their unworthiness, while God has justified them freely from all things; and while they may conclude that they have no part or lot in the inheritance, yet their title is as positive and clear as the Word of God can make it. If they are born of God, then they are the children of God; and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus their Lord: and being one with Christ, their heirship is as positive as Christ's.

Lastly, we shall consider the certainty of their possession. An heir may have the clearest and fullest title to an estate yet has never and may never enjoy it as its possessor. To take possession of it he may have to cross the billowy deep or raging sea and become wrecked. Or, he may have to travel by land and fall into the hands of an assassin or robber and lose his life. Or, before reaching maturity he may be stricken down by the many diseases to which humanity is so liable. Or, if he were preserved himself, the estate may be destroyed by fire or anarchy, for there is really no place of security upon earth. But what shall hinder the Christian from realizing his inheritance? Why, absolutely nothing. His "inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away;" reserved in heaven for him, where danger never comes. Fire, water, or rust can never consume it, neither can the sword destroy nor thieves take it away. And the happiest thought and consolation is that the heir is as safe as the inheritance, for he is kept by the power of God thru faith unto salvation. Let us now consider the circumstances of minority. There is a period in life when we are all under age, and the apostle Paul expresses himself in this manner. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, tho he be lord of all: but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." Before this season arrives we must submit to many corrections and restraints and perhaps not pleasant to our feelings, the reasons of which we cannot fully appreciate. Just so with us as Christians. In our sojournings here we are in our minority. Death will bring us of age, and *only* death, for so it is appointed by the Father in heaven. And let us remember that we are now under a course of discipline in which we must exercise patience and self denial, while it appears very frequently that we as Christians are favored

less than the sinners around us. But let us rejoice in hope for we have not only the prospects of an inheritance, but we have the assurance; tho we are disciplined and educated in the school of patience, self denial, and long suffering, it will by and by elevate us to the rank of the sanctified as we journey across the river of death. I feel that we are receiving remittances thru the Holy Spirit and are thus supplied by the riches of God's grace, as we are trained by the Divine Teacher for the sublime sphere we are to fill. Oh, what should our deportment be then! It ought to be ennobled for holiness is the true dignity of the soul, while sin is its vilest degradation. Holiness will elevate us to heaven, but sin will cast us down to hell. We should have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, even to abstain from the very appearance of evil. By nature we were the children of wrath, but by the grace of God we are raised into a glorious relation with Him, if so be that we suffer with Christ. There were difficulties in the way of our adoption which God alone could remove and surmount. And He mercifully removed those obstacles by the sacrifice of his own Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Poor and vile as we were he was willing to raise us up out of the dust of the earth and to adopt us into his own family as sons and daughters. Needy and impoverished as we were he gave us the grateful invitation to partake of the bread of heaven and the water of life freely, and promised us an inheritance among all his favored people, even the princes of his people. Then, oh then, my dear friends, will you become willing to devote your remaining time to God. It will promote and strengthen your virtues as well as regulate and calm your temper. It will create and increase fidelity to God, and produce to the highest degree, purity and holiness in your character. It will inspire within your hearts the most pleasing emotions by opening up to you a field of enjoyment to which the vulgar and vicious are entire strangers—enjoyments which the world cannot give, hence more valuable because they belong to you only as Christians here, while they will also follow you in the world to come in full fruition. You may be placed in the most favorable circumstances here to which the human state admits, yet you have no real tangible enjoyment unless you become devoted to God by serving him faithfully thru evil as well as good report which will assure you an inheritance to be enjoyed thru all future ages. This world cannot always amuse you, neither can it shield you from harm, distress or pain. You, no doubt, have all more or less experienced that adversity is your foe, and that you have to pass thru many hours of trials and sorrows as you journey thru life's rugged pathway.

If you are strangers to God and to a common interest to the inheritance reserved for the sanctified, how dreary and how solemn will the gloom of solitude often prove! With